DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 402 637 CS 509 396

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TITLE Drama and Young Children.
PUB DATE [96]
NOTE 15p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; *Creative Dramatics; Creative Expression; *Dramatic Play; Early Childhood Education; Puppetry; Songs; *Young Children
IDENTIFIERS Childhood Experiences; Retelling

ABSTRACT

Drama can enhance creativity for young children. Opportunities to participate in dramatic play activities and creative dramatics should be included in the experiences for young children. Through creative dramatics and dramatic play, children develop cognitive, motor, social and emotional behaviors, and they develop aesthetic appreciation. Dramatic play is child initiated, but it can be encouraged by a well planned, creative environment. Creative dramatics involves a conscious effort to retell a story in dramatic form. Poems, rhymes, and fingerplays provide excellent resources for creative dramatics. Puppets are an excellent medium for creative dramatics or dramatic play. Selecting songs and making props to illustrate songs encourages creative dramatics. Props, scenery, and costumes can stimulate, motivate, and enrich creative dramatics. (Contains suggested materials, books, fingerplays, and songs.) (RS)

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Drama and Young Children

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Drama and Young Children
Betty Ruth Baker

Make believe and pretend is a part of the young child's world and can be observed in play activities. The role of drama in the learning environment can stimulate cognitive skills involving thinking, reasoning and problem solving. Language development is enhanced through variety in dramatic activities.

Social and emotional behavior can develop through cooperation, planning, and accepting responsibilities. Expression of feelings and ideas can enhance self concept and self esteem.

Dramatic activities provide opportunities for motor development as children participate in a variety of activities and take on various roles. Fine motor skills develop as children create props for creative dramatic activities.

Experience with resources, media and materials provide children with opportunities to develop aesthetic appreciation. Careful planning of the environment and selecting appropriate activities can involve dramatic experiences that can provide optimum learning.

Types of Drama

Three types of drama can be observed in learning environments for young children. Dramatic play or role play can be identified in play activities as children pretend. Social, emotional and cognitive development is enhanced as children are involved in dramatic play.

Creative dramatics is a direct effort to retell a story in dramatic form. This type of drama is usually teacher initiated and directed with children assuming roles and using props.

Formal drama is the presentation of a play using a script. This type of drama is the least observed in environments for young children.

Dramatic Play or Role Play

Dramatic play is child initiated, but it can be encouraged by a well planned, creative environment. Create a dramatic play center by making various props available for role play.

Examples:

Mail carrier
: Mailbag, mailbox, letters, packages.

Firefighter
: Hose, wagon, ladder, hat.

Grocery Clerk
: Apron, baskets, play money, cash register, food carton and cans, shopping bags and cart.

Baker

Hat, pans, apron, rolling pin, spoons, bowls, cookie cutters.

Develop a dress up center in the learning environment. Provide a mirror, dressing table and a variety of clothing. Boxes, shopping bags and suitcases can add to this center. Add a hat tree to the center with a variety of hats. Make changes in the center to accompany to themes and seasons.

The home living center provides opportunities for role play. Children who are lacking in experiences may need adult guidance to take on roles. The home living center should include:

- Kitchen with table, chairs, stove, cabinet, sink and refrigerator.
- Living room with a soft place to sit, books, newspapers and magazines may be included.
- Bedroom with dresser, chest, doll beds.

  Dolls should be of all sizes and diverse ethnic characteristics should be represented.

A variety of props can stimulate dramatic play.

Examples:

typewriter	briefcase
old cameras	brooms, mops, dust pan
tool kits	pretend food
clocks, timers	address books
jewelry	telephones and telephone books
flashlights	maps
	timers

The block center offers an opportunity for role play. Provide unit and hollow blocks as well as a variety of building materials. Include accessories to encourage building. Accessories should include cars, trucks, airplanes, signs, family cut outs, animals, and furniture. Provide an open space suitable for building and movement with role play.

Creative Dramatics

Creative dramatics involves a conscious effort to retell a story in dramatic form. Literature provides many opportunities for creative dramatics. Retelling stories in dramatic form encourages creativity, comprehension, sequence, order, language and listening skills.

Literature for Creative Dramatics

Select books, poetry, or nursery rhymes which have a clear sequence of events and simple dialogue. Name the characters and actions that appear in each episode. The children choose the words as they dramatize the story.

Suggested books:

Carle, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*
Carle, *The Very Busy Spider*
Martin, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*
Martin, *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?*
McCloskey, *Make Way For Ducklings*
Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are*

Traditional Stories:

The Three Bears
The Three Pigs
The Three Billy Goats Gruff
Peter Rabbit

Poems, rhymes, and fingerplays provide excellent resources for creative dramatics.

Suggested poems:

Poems:

"My Shadow" by Robert Louis Stevenson
"Who Has Seen The Wind?" by Christina Rossetti
"Clouds" by Christina Rossetti
"The Umbrella Brigade" by Laura Richards
"The Little Turtle" by Rachel Lindsary
"Indian Children" by Annette Wynne
"The Swing" by Robert Louis Stevenson

Mother Goose and Nursery Rhymes:

Jack Be Nimble
This Little Pig Went to Market
Jack and Jill
Humpty Dumpty
Little Bo-Peep
Little Boy Blue
Little Miss Muffet
Mary Had a Little Lamb
Three Little Kittens

Fingerplays are brief stories that rhyme and can be dramatized by the fingers. They can be used to encourage creative dramatics. Props can be provided to stimulate creativity.

Suggested fingerplays:

Five Little Monkeys

Five little monkeys playing on the floor,
One ran away and then there were four.

Four little monkeys banging in a tree,
One ran away and then there were three.

Three little monkeys living in the zoo,
One ran away and then there were two.

Two little monkeys sitting in the sun,
One ran away and then there was one.

One little monkey left all alone,
It ran away, and now they're all gone.

By Betty Ruth Baker
Props: Make paper bag puppets

Monkeys in the Zoo

One brown monkey living in the zoo,
Here comes another, and now there are two.

Two brown monkeys sitting in a tree,
Here comes another, and now there are three.

Three brown monkeys playing by the door,
Here comes another, and now there are four.

Four brown monkeys jump and hop and dive,
Here comes another, and now there are five.

Five brown monkeys playing in the zoo,
Five brown monkeys looking at you.

By Betty Ruth Baker
Props: Make body puppets

Five Little Kittens

Five little kittens playing by the door,
One ran away and then there were four.

Four little kittens playing with me,
One ran away and then there were three.

Three little kittens playing with you,
One ran away and then there were two.

Two little kittens playing in the sun,
One ran away and then there was one.

One little kitten on a sunny day,
One little kitten ran away.

By Betty Ruth Baker
Props: Make cat hats

Snowflakes

Five little snowflakes falling down.
(make hand motion from above head to floor)

The first one said, "I'm touching the ground."
(point to thumb)

The second one said, "I didn't make a sound."
(point to first finger)

The third one said, "I'm fluffy and white."
(point to second finger)

The fourth one said, "I'm a pretty sight."
(point to third finger)

The fifth one said, "The sun is bright."
(point to fourth finger)

Then all five snowflakes vanished out of sight.
(place hand to back)

By Betty Ruth Baker
Props: Use white scarves or paper streamers for movement

Clowns

Five funny clowns in a row.
(hold up hand)

The first clown bowed to the people so.
(bend thumb)

The second clown ran a race.
(move first finger)

The third clown had a funny face.
(move second finger)

The fourth clown jumped in a ring.
(move third finger)

The fifth clown began to sing.
(move fourth finger)

Five funny clowns in a row.
(hold up hand)

They wave good-bye, and it's time to go.
(wave hand)

Props: Make clown faces from paper bags or paper plates.

Teddy Bears

Five little teddy bears ready to play.
(hold up right hand)

The first one said, "Let's have a happy day."
(move thumb)

The second one said, "I'm ready for some fun."
(move first finger)

The third one said, "I can see the sun."
(move second finger)

The fourth one said, "I will play with Mary."
(move third finger)

The fifth one said, "I will play with Jerry."
(move fourth or little finger)

Five little teddy bears ready to play.
(hold up right hand)

Five little teddy bears ran away.
(place hand behind you) (repeat rhyme with left hand)

Props: Provide five teddy bears or make teddy bear puppets.

The Cars

One little car was painted blue.
(hold up thumb)

Honk, honk--here comes another, and then there were two.
(move hand, hold up thumb and finger)

Two little cars for all to see.
(hold up thumb and finger)

Honk, honk--here comes another, and then there were three.
(move hand, hold up thumb and two fingers)

Three little cars; we need more.
(hold up thumb and two fingers)

Honk, honk--here comes another, and then there were four.
(move hand, hold up thumb and three fingers)

Four little cars out for a drive.
(hold up thumb and three fingers)

Honk, honk--here comes another, and then there were five.
(move hand, hold up thumb and four fingers)

Honk, honk. Five little cars drive away.
(move hand forward two times, then place hand to back)

Props: Make cars using various sizes of boxes.

Puppets are an excellent medium for creative dramatics or dramatic play. Children respond to and through puppets. Puppets are anything inanimate that is given life through imaginative movement. The word puppet comes from the Latin *pupa*, meaning girl or doll.

There are different types of puppets. Stick puppets, hand puppets, shadow puppets and marionettes can be a part of dramatics. Puppets can be very simple, elaborate, teacher made or child made.

Puppets can be made from a variety of materials. Paper bags, envelopes, paper rolls, gloves, socks, paper plates, cups, spoons and various paper products supple raw materials for construction of puppets. There is also a variety of puppets available to purchase.

Display puppets to encourage creative dramatics. A clothes line, puppet tree, apron and puppet theater can motivate creative dramatics or encourage dramatic play.

Music is a part of a child's world. Children have opportunities to express feelings and ideas with singing and dancing. Provide a variety of songs, records, and tapes for children. Make props to accompany music.

Suggested materials:

Piggyback Songs
More Piggyback Songs
Piggyback songs for Infants and Toddlers
Holiday Piggyback Songs
Animal Piggyback Songs
Piggyback Songs for School
Compiled by Jean Warren
Warren Publishing House, Inc.
P.O. Box 2250
Everett, WA 98203

Select songs and make props to illustrate songs to encourage creative dramatics. Store props in bags or boxes (prop bags or prop boxes) for the children to use independently.

Example: "Famer in the Dell"
Farmer - Straw hat
Wife - Apron
Child - Toy
Nurse - Cap
Dog - dog ears head band
Cat - cat ears head band
Mouse - mouse ears head band

Other suggested songs:

"Mary Had a Little Lamb", "Bingo", "Skip to My Lou", "Oh Susanna", "Six Little Ducks".

Write words to familiar tunes. Sing and dramatize the song. Props may be provided to encourage creative dramatics.

Examples:

In the Park
Tune: London Bridge

In the park we'll run and play,
Run and play, run and play.
In the park we'll run and play,
Run and play today.

In the park we'll jump and hop,
Jump and hop, jump and hop.
In the park we'll jump and hop,
Jump and hop today.

In the park we'll jump the rope,
jump the rope, jump the rope.
In the park we'll jump the rope,
Jump the rope today.

In the park we'll play with balls,
Play with balls, play with balls.
In the park we'll play with balls,
Play with balls today.

In the park we'll skip around,
Skip around, skip around.
In the park we'll skip around
Skip around today.

In the park we'll have some fun,
Have some fun, have some fun.
In the park we'll have some fun,
Have some fun today.

By: Betty Ruth Baker

Going to the Zoo
Tune: Mary Had a Little Lamb

We're going to the zoo today,
Zoo today, zoo today.
We're going to the zoo today,
Going to the zoo today.

Animals live in the zoo,
In the zoo, in the zoo.
Animal live in the zoo,
In the zoo today.

See the lion in the cage,
In the cage, in the cage.
See the lion in the cage,
In the cage today.

See the monkey in the tree,
In the tree, in the tree.
See the monkey in the tree,
In the zoo today.

See the elephant walking by,
Walking by, walking by.
See the elephant walking by,
In the zoo today.

See the seals splashing now,
Splashing now, splashing now.
See the seals splashing now,
In the zoo today.

See the zebra with great big stripes,
Great big stripes, great big stripes.
See the zebra with great big stripes,
In the zoo today.

See the bear that's big and brown,
Big and brown, big and brown.
See the bear that's big and brown,
In the zoo today.

We saw the animals in the zoo,
In the zoo, in the zoo,
We saw the animals in the zoo,
In the zoo today.

By: Betty Ruth Baker
Props: Make animals masks or puppets

Five Fat Ducks
Tune: "Three Blind Mice"

Five fat ducks, five fat ducks,
See how they swim, see how they swim.
They swim and swim and swim around,
They swim to the bank, and walk on the ground.
Five fat ducks.

By: Betty Ruth Baker
Props: Duck hats, masks, or puppets.

Going to School
Tune: SKip to My Lou

Come along children we're going to school,
Come along children we're going to school.
Come along children we're going to school,
Going to school today.

Come along children we'll work and play,
Come along children we'll work and play.
Come along children we'll work and play,
Work and play today.

Come along children we'll read some books,
Come along children we'll read some books.
Come along children we'll read some books,
Read some books today.

Include play some games, sing some songs or other activities that illustrate what the children do at school. Group the children for each verse and let them dramatize the action. Props may be provided to illustrate the verse. This could be planned to use for parent visitation day.

Appreciation of Drama

Use films, filmstrips, videotapes and television programs to encourage appreciation of drama. Select quality programs. Organize the environment for each child to have a space. Familiarize children with characters and story lines, and appropriate behaviors. After viewing, involve the children in discussion about characters and plot. Encourage an appreciation for viewing.

Attend dramatic productions appropriate for children when possible. Discuss acting, plot and characters. Viewing can encourage creative dramatics and dramatic play.

Planning Dramatic Activities

Include drama in the curriculum for young children. Consider developmentally appropriate activities and media. Identify expected outcomes and encourage creative experiences. Remember to model behavior for children who have limited experiences.

Props, scenery and costumes can stimulate, motivate and enrich creative dramatics. Involve the children in making props, scenery and costumes, and provide opportunities for creative problem solving.

Develop prop boxes or bags for books, stories, poems, rhymes and fingerplays. Media that is available can motivate creative dramatic activities.

Conclusion

Drama can enhance creativity for young children. Opportunities to participate in dramatic play activities and creative dramatics should be included in the experiences for young children. Through creative dramatics and dramatic play children develop cognitive, motor, social and emotional behaviors, and they develop aesthetic appreciation.

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